DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 210 553 CE 030 865

AUTHOR Romaniuk, Jean Gasen; Swartz, Laurel
TITLE Development of Educational Programs for Older Adult Learners: A Statewide Evaluation.
PUB DATE Nov 81
NOTE 22p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gerontological Society (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, November 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Attitudes; College Planning; *College Programs; College Students; Community Role; Community Support; Educational Gerontology; Educational Needs; Educational Policy; Financial Support; Higher Education; Middle Aged Adults; Nontraditional Education; Nontraditional Students; *Older Adults; *Organizational Effectiveness; *Program Development; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS *Virginia

ABSTRACT

Declines in the numbers of 18-22-year-old college students, coupled with rapidly rising costs for providing education, are contributing to the increased efforts that colleges and universities are making to attract nontraditional students into both traditional and nontraditional programs. A study was made of all 73 colleges and universities in Virginia to ascertain what factors influence the development (or nondevelopment) of programs for older adults. Information was collected on how such factors as financial resources, administrative support, cost of the program, community interest and support, etc., might influence program development. Results indicated that two factors had the most positive impact on program development overall: general demand or need for such a program and administrative support within the institution. Two factors having the most negative impact were inadequate financial resources and cost of the program to participants. Analysis of differences between those colleges with, versus those without, a current program revealed that knowledge and support of the community and adequate financial resources most clearly differentiated these two groups. Finally, general demand, administrative support, and community support were much more positively related to program growth for two-year public institutions when compared with four-year public and private institutions. It was concluded that the knowledge of and access to the community, along with state and institutional policies that provide incentives for financial viability, are central to the development of programs for older adult learners. (Author/KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED210553

DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR OLDER ADULT LEARNERS: A STATEWIDE EVALUATION

Jean Gasen Romaniuk, Ph.D.
Coordinator, Educational Research,
Evaluation and Training
Virginia Center on Aging at VCU
Richmond, VA 23284

Laurel Swartz, M.S.
Virginia Center on Aging at VCU
Richmond, VA 23284

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the
Gerontological Society, Toronto, Canada.

November 1981

CE030865

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jean Gasen Romaniuk

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR OLDER ADULT LEARNERS: A STATEWIDE EVALUATION

INTRODUCTION

Institutions of higher education are facing increasingly difficult economic challenges. Declines in the proportion of full-time, "traditionally-aged" 18-22 year olds, coupled with rapidly rising costs for delivering quality education are contributing to this crisis (Carnegie Council, 1980; Glenny, 1980). Although efforts directed at the older adult learner (aged 60+) have not been the major focus of higher education in the past, more and more colleges and universities are beginning to recognize the potential impact which this target population might have in increasing enrollments in both traditional and nontraditional courses and programs.

Research on the older adult learner in higher education normally has focussed on assessing interests and motivations from the older adults' perspective (e.g., Covey, 1980; Graney and Hays, 1976; Heisel, Darkenwald and Anderson, 1981; Hiemstra, 1976; March, Hooper and Baum, 1977; Perkins and Robertson-Tchabo, 1981). Generally, it has been learned from studies such as these that the proportion of older adult participation in higher education is much lower than other age groups. Those who do participate tend to have more formal educational backgrounds than nonparticipants and are motivated to attend for self-initiated reasons. In addition, the types of courses which are preferred varies greatly. Some prefer the more traditional liberal arts courses in the arts and humanities (Perkins and Robertson-Tchabo, 1981; Knowlton, 1977). Others seem to prefer more instrumental kinds of organized learning experiences which assist in successful adaptation to the aging process (Hiemstra, 1976; Long, 1980).

Social and situational factors, including opportunities for meeting and interacting with new people, more convenient times and locations for courses, and shorter course formats are also usually preferred by older adult learners (Daniel, Templin and Shearon, 1977).

Somewhat less research has investigated educational programs from an administrator's perspective. Much of the information on the administration of older adult learner programs has centered on program overviews and guides such as Weinstock's (1978) The graying of the campus, Scanlon's (1978) How to plan a college program for older people, and several others (AED, 1974; Cross and Florio, 1978; Hendricks, 1973; Korim, 1974; Rappole, 1977). These are quite useful from a program design standpoint, but provide little research information on program administrative issues.

Those studies which have assessed administrative issues have focussed on the financial aspects of program planning and participation (Chelsvig and Timmerman, 1979; Long and Rossing, 1979; Long, 1980). Data collected from the study by Long and Rossing (1979), for example, found that 27 states had statewide legislation or policies concerning tuition reduction or tuition waivers for older adults. However, the space available requirements for enrollment coupled with the lack of state formula-funding assistance for participation, were both viewed as negative elements to program development. Additionally, Chelsvig and Timmerman (1979) pointed out that the existence and development of a program is only as effective as the commitment of the college or university to provide necessary support services to older persons. Included in this vein are special efforts to recruit older persons most in need of additional education, provide academic counseling and orientation, and help ensure that faculty and administrators anticipate and respond to older adults' needs. Chelsvig and Timmerman (1979) also note

that two year public institutions were more likely to offer programs with special learning activities and have adopted special tuition policies when compared to private institutions.

The present study was initiated in order to assess administrative characteristics of programs for older adult learners in greater detail. More specifically, information on what factors differentially influence the development (or nondevelopment) of programs is of prime importance in this study. In addition, differences between public two year, four year, and private institutions are analyzed, given that each type of institution carries unique advantages and disadvantages in its ability to develop a program designed for the older adult learner.

METHOD

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument used in this study was developed and modified from three nationwide surveys (Atelsek and Gomberg, 1977; Cross and Valley, 1974; DeCrow, 1974). After pilot-testing the survey with a sample of schools in Virginia and obtaining feedback from several individuals knowledgeable in survey design and gerontology, the final survey was prepared. The survey consisted of six sections including: 1) general program characteristics (e.g., program existence, organization, financing, recruitment, age of program); 2) instructional characteristics of the program (e.g., subjects taught, learning formats, time and location of instruction); 3) additional services provided (e.g., reduced fees, legal, medical, or counseling services, transportation, student lounge); 4) characteristics of participants (e.g., age, number of participants, sex, educational background); 5) program development issues (e.g., demand, costs,

support services, institutional support); and 6) attitudinal information concerning education and older adults (e.g., general abilities to learn, need for age segregated vs. age integrated learning).

Procedures

The surveys were sent to all 73 public and private institutions of higher education in Virginia. The surveys were directed to each college or university's president, vice-president, or dean of academic affairs based on the recommendations of appropriate administrative officers provided by the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia. These designated individuals were asked to complete the survey or have the individual responsible for the program (if different from the respondent) fill out the survey and return it. All survey respondents were asked to complete the first and last sections of the survey which included information on program existence, program development issues, and attitudinal questions. Respondents were also asked to indicate their current academic position in order to assist in further identification of respondents. After follow-up efforts by mail and phone, a total of 73 surveys (or 100% response rate) were returned.

RESULTS

Institutions and Respondents

Twenty-three colleges and universities indicated that they offered programs especially designed and organized to serve the older adult learner. This represents 32% of the total population of colleges and universities in Virginia. Persons responding to the survey worked in a variety of academic positions. A large proportion of respondents were deans (34%), persons in the continuing education departments (23%), or presidents/vice-presidents of

the school (13%). The remaining 30% of the surveys were completed by persons from 12 other positions, including: Director of Programs, Acting Coordinator of Counseling Services, Coordinator of Planning, Provost, Chairman Humanities Division, and others.

Program Organization

A great majority of the colleges and universities who offered a special program reported having a formal organizational unit (83%) on campus that is responsible for coordinating or directing their efforts to serve older adult learners. These included such organizational units as the continuing education department or the Dean's Office. In addition, nine schools (39%) indicated that they were part of a cooperative interinstitutional program.

In terms of other administrative functions, most schools identifying special funding efforts for older adult programs indicated multiple sources of funding. The most common sources of funding were institutional funds (75%), fees charged to participants (67%), and funding from the federal government (71%). In terms of marketing or advertising, it is clear that major efforts were accomplished by brochures (68%) and newspaper advertisements (62%). The use of personal contacts in community or educational settings was also seen as a major focus for recruitment efforts (56%). Television and radio were used less frequently, although this may be due, in part, to the relative costs of such endeavors.

Finally, over one third (36%) of the existing programs have been in operation for three to five years. Another 41% had been operating programs six years or longer. So, although the total number of schools offering educational programs and services was still relatively small, those schools

who do provide these services have shown a long-standing interest in the older adult learner.

Program Developmental Issues

All institutions were asked to fill out information on issues related to program development. For each issue, schools were asked to indicate whether the effect of that issue was positive, negative, or insignificant with respect to the development of an older adult education program. A summary of this information is presented in Table 1. Two factors appeared to have had the greatest positive impact on program development: general demand or need for such a program (69%) and administrative support within the institution (62%). The two major factors having a negative effect on program development were inadequate financial resources (57%) and cost of the program to participants (39%).

In order to find out more about the differences between institutions that do and do not currently have programs, a multiple discriminant analysis was calculated. For this analysis, respondents were split on an a priori basis into two groups: those institutions which currently had programs and those which did not. All ten program developmental variables were entered into the analysis which utilized the criterion of minimizing Wilkes' lambda (Klecka, 1975). The results of the discriminant analysis are presented in Table 2 and 3.

As indicated in Table 2, the highest mean values for institutions with programs occurred for the items: general demand or need, community interest and support, and administrative support within the university. For schools without programs, those variables having the lowest means were inadequate

support services, cost of the program to participants, and inadequate financial resources to run the program.

In terms of the discriminant analysis, those factors having the largest positive standardized coefficients were locating or contacting potential participants (+.69) and community interest and support for a program (+.52). Since the group's centroid was positive for institutions with programs, then these factors were considered particularly important in having a positive influence on program development when compared with those not having programs.

Conversely, those factors with the largest negative, standardized coefficients were inadequate financial resources and educational materials. Given the negative group centroids for institutions without programs, then it is apparent that these factors were influential in their negative impact on development.

In Table 3, the results of the classification analysis using the standardized discriminant coefficients are presented. The results indicated that the discriminant function was quite successful in correctly predicting both institutional respondents with (82.6%) and without (90.0%) programs, with an overall correct prediction rate of 87.7%.

Public Two-Year, Four-Year, and Private Institutions

Three program developmental items differed by institutional type including: general demand or need ($X^2_4 = 14.00$, $p < .007$), administrative support ($X^2_4 = 17.27$, $p < .002$), and community interest and support ($X^2_4 = 9.30$, $p < .05$). Table 4 summarizes the proportion of institutions indicating these effects by institutional type. It is clear from Table 4 that these items were most often rated as positive for private four-year and public

two-year institutions while they were regarded as more neutral or negative for public four-year institutions. Caution in interpreting these data is advised, however, given that the number of observations and concomitant expected cell frequencies fall below five in many cases.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

This study provided a statewide assessment of programs for older adult learners in higher education. Based on these data it was concluded that roughly one-third of all colleges and universities offered a specially designed program for the older learner. A majority of the programs had been in existence for over three years and used multiple sources of funding to operate. In addition, most institutions used traditional means of advertising and disseminating information about the program (brochures, catalogs, newspapers, personal contacts).

In looking at developmental issues which might influence program development, general demand or need for the program along with administrative support within the university were most frequently cited for their positive impact. Financial factors, including those related to general program administration and actual costs to participants, were most often rated for their negative impact on program development.

Further differences in program developmental issues were examined between those institutions which currently have programs and those which do not. Community awareness and support factors most clearly differentiated these two groups. That is, institutions with programs found community support and interest for older adult programs along with the ability to locate potential participants in the community most positively related to program development. Having adequate financial resources also differed

significantly between groups, with those not having programs being more likely to indicate a negative impact on development (i.e., inadequate financial resources). Also, the perception of the lack of specialized educational materials was more likely to be associated with schools having programs than those without. Finally, the discriminant function was quite powerful in correctly classifying program status for institutions with and without older adult learner programs.

An assessment of differences between public and private institutions also indicated that general demand or need, administrative support within the institution and community interest and support had differential impact. In these cases, public two-year colleges were most likely to be influenced most positively, while public four-year institutions were most negatively infuenced. Private colleges also indicated positive impact of these variables, although somewhat less positive than the two-year public institutions.

What can be concluded concerning older adult learner programs based on these data? There appear to be three major conclusions which follow from an understanding of the current literature and these data:

1. Special programs for older adult learners are still the exception, rather than the norm in higher education. This is not surprising since older adults have traditionally not been the targeted population for the development of programs and curricula in higher education (Covey, 1981). However, given that the average amount of formal education is increasing with each succeeding age cohort, and a strong predictive correlation exists between participation and former education (Anderson and Darkenwald, 1979), one might expect increases in the number of older adult participants in future years.

This trend is already occurring for special programs such as Elderhostel (Romaniuk, 1981). It is likely that increasing levels of participation will also result in increased attention to meeting the needs of older adult learners by administrators in higher education.

2. Knowledge of and access to the community is an important component in developing and maintaining programs for older adult learners. Since older adults are not yet coming directly to the institution in great numbers, institutions with special programs have learned that they must reach out into the community to nurture and develop their programs (Chelsvig and Timmerman, 1979). Knowledge of where potential participants are likely to reside, and how to engender the support of key community leaders and agencies are both central to this effort. In addition, developing programs which assess and meet the educational, social and other needs of potential participants is also more likely to result in program growth. This "needs assessment" approach is vital to the rationale and accountability for all educational programs in two-year public community colleges. Therefore, it is not surprising that community colleges find these aspects most positively related to program growth, and have been the leader in developing programs for older adult learners thus far.
3. One of the keys to future growth of older adult learners' programs lies in its financial viability for institutions and their participants. As mentioned previously, the tuition-reduction or tuition-waiver programs do not currently offer financial incentives for institutions because participants are not included in determination of their formula-funding process.[2] There is increasing pressure on

administrators of all academic programs to maintain only those programs which are self-supporting. Allocating resources for programs in which no financial compensations are given (e.g., a special program for older adult learners in which tuition is free for all participants) is not being viewed as cost-effective, particularly when enrollment declines are occurring in other academic programs. Providing state incentives through inclusion in formula-funding may help alleviate this pressure and provide direct incentives for the development of older adult learner programs. Further research on the impact of tuition-reduction on projected enrollments is needed to provide state and university policy-makers with estimates of potential costs and benefits from such a change, however.

In addition, further research which assesses the impact of different tuition plans on motivation for participation and actual participation is needed. In this case, the development and marketing of different kinds of programs (traditional and nontraditional) on different cost bases (free, reduced, regular tuition) could be established and geared for different needs which older adult learners might have. Thus, for example, low-cost community programs on consumer education might be possible under the same general aegis as a workshop on investment planning geared for individuals with higher incomes. Clearly, the issue of cost is a sensitive one, but policies which allow experimental openness and flexibility in the development of program funding should be encouraged. Hopefully, this will help contribute to our understanding of cost and its role in encouraging participation while ensuring the continued development of programs for older adult learners.

Table 1

WHAT EFFECT HAVE THE FOLLOWING FACTORS HAD ON YOUR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT?

Program Development Issues	N[1]	Level of Effect		
		Positive Effect	No Effect	Negative Effect
General Demand or Need	54	69%	20%	11%
Community Interest and Support	54	59%	30%	11%
Administrative Support within the Institution	55	62%	34%	4%
Locating or Contacting Potential Participants	53	45%	38%	17%
Faculty Support within the Institution	54	54%	42%	4%
Facilities	55	44%	40%	16%
Supportive Services	54	24%	41%	35%
Adequate Educational Materials for this Age Group	54	41%	41%	18%
Cost of Program to Potential Participants	53	23%	38%	39%
Adequate Financial Resources	53	24%	19%	57%

[1] N indicates number who responded to each Question.

Table 2

SUMMARY OF DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS

Variables[1]	Institutions With Programs (N = 21) M	SD	Institutions Without Programs (N = 29) M	SD	Standardized Discriminant Coefficients[2]
General Demand or Need	2.86	.48	2.41	.73	.00
Community Interest and Support	2.81	.60	2.17	.66	.52
Administrative Support within the Institution	2.71	.56	2.48	.57	.29
Locating or Contacting Potential Participants	2.62	.74	2.00	.65	.69
Faculty Support within the Institution	2.52	.60	2.48	.57	-.15
Facilities	2.29	.85	2.21	.68	.33
Supportive Services	2.10	.83	1.72	.70	.06
Adequate Educational Materials for this Age Group	2.05	.86	2.24	.64	-.62
Cost of Program to Potential Participants	2.00	.95	1.69	.60	.16
Adequate Financial Resources	1.71	.96	1.65	.77	-.57

[1]Based on a scale of 1 = Negative effect, 2 = No effect, 3 = Positive effect on program development.

[2]Wilkes lambda = +.64 (X^2 = 19.31, $p < .03$), Canonical R = +.60. The group centroids were +.86 and -.62 for institutions with and without programs, respectively.

Table 3

SUMMARY OF CLASSIFICATION ANALYSIS

Actual Group	N	Predicted Group: Institutions With Programs	Predicted Group: Institutions Without Programs	
Institutions With Programs	23	19 82.6%	4 17.4%	
Institutions Without Programs	50	5 10.0%	45 90.0%	
Total % Correctly Classified				64 87.7%

Table 4

DIFFERENCES IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES
BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE

Institutional Type	N[1]	General Demand or Need			Administrative Support			Community Interest and Support		
		Positive Effect	No E.	Negative Effect	Positive Effect	No E.	Negative Effect	Positive Effect	No E.	Negative Effect
Private	22	59%	32%	9%	70%	30%	0%	50%	36%	14%
Public Two-Year	21	90%	10%	0%	76%	14%	10%	82%	19%	0%
Public Four-Year	11	45%	18%	37%	18%	82%	0%	36%	36%	28%

FOOTNOTES

[1]For the purposes of the survey, a program was defined as an organized plan specifically designed to meet the educational and/or other service needs of the older adult learner. Older adult learner was defined as any student 60 years of age or older. There was also an opportunity for respondents to indicate the age criterion, if different from 60, on the survey.

[2]Long (1980) reports that only two states, Arkansas and North Carolina, had amended earlier legislation to permit institutions to include waiver participants in their formula funding process.

REFERENCES

Academy for Educational Development. Never too old to learn. New York: AED, Inc., 1974.

Anderson, R. E. and Darkenwald, G. G. Participation and persistence in American adult education. New York: The College Board, 1979.

Atelsek, F. J. and Gomberg, I. L. College and university services for older adults. Washington, DC: American Council on Education, 1977.

Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education. 3000 Futures: The next 20 years for higher education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1980.

Chelsvig, K. A. and Timmermann, S. Tuition policies of higher educational institutions and state government and the older learner. Educational Gerontology, 1979, 4, 147-159.

Covey, H. C. Exploratory study of the acquisition of a college student role by older people. The Gerontologist, 1980, 20, 173-181.

Covey, H. C. American higher education and older people. Educational Gerontology, 1981, 6, 373-383.

Cross, K. P. and Valley, J. Planning nontraditional programs: An analysis of the issues for postsecondary education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974.

Cross, W. and Florio, C. You are never too old to learn. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978.

Daniel, D. E., Templin, R. G. and Shearon, R. W. The value orientations of older adults toward education. Educational Gerontology, 1977, 2, 33-42.

DeCrow, R. New learning for older Americans. Washington, DC: Adult Education Association, 1974.

Glenny, L. A. Demographic and related issues for higher education in the 1980's. Journal of Higher Education, 1980, 51, 363-380.

Graney, M. J. and Hays, W. C. Senior students: Higher education after age 62. Educational Gerontology, 1976, 1, 343-359.

Heisel, M. A., Darkenwald, G.G. and Anderson, R. E. Participation in organized educational activities among adults age 60 and over. Educational Gerontology, 1981, 6, 227-240.

Hendricks, A. (Ed.). A manual on planning educational programs for older adults. Tallahassee, FL: Department of Adult Education, Florida State University, 1973.

Hiemstra, R. Older adult learning: Instrumental and expressive categories. Educational Gerontology, 1976, 1, 227-236.

Klecka, W. R. Discriminant analysis. In N. E. Nie, C. H. Hull, J. C. Jenkins, K. Steinbrenner and D. H. Bent (Eds.), Statistical package for the social science. (2nd edition). New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.

Knowlton, M. P. Liberal Arts: The Elderhostel plan for survival. Educational Gerontology, 1977, 2, 87-93.

Korim, A. S. Older Americans and community colleges: A guide for program implementation. Washington, DC: American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1974.

Long, H. B. and Rossing, B. E. Tuition waiver plans for older Americans in postsecondary public education institutions. Educational Gerontology, 1979, 4, 161-174.

Long, H. B. Characteristics of senior citizens' educational tuition waivers in twenty-one states: A follow-up study. Educational Gerontology, 1980, 5, 139-149.

March, G. B., Hooper, J. O. and Baum, J. Life-span education and the older adult: Living is learning. Educational Gerontology, 1977, 2, 163-172.

Perkins, H. V. and Robertson-Tchabo, E. A. Retirees return to college: An evaluative study at one university campus. Educational Gerontology, 1981, 6, 273-287.

Rappole, G. H. An overview of community college programs for elderly Texans. Community/Junior Research Quarterly, 1977, 1, 363-387.

Romaniuk, J. Older adult learners in higher education: Participation motives of Elderhostelers. Unpublished manuscript, Virginia Center on Aging, Richmond, VA, 1981.

Scanlon, J. How to plan a college program for older people. New York: Academy for Educational Development, 1978.

Weinstock, R. The graying of the campus. New York: Educational Facilities Laboratories, 1978.